

MAKE THE CONNECTION

WRITING EFFECTIVE POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

“AFTER EVERY MAJOR WAR IN THIS COUNTRY, THE SOLDIERS HAVE COME BACK AND GONE TO WORK, AND THE ECONOMY REALLY PICKS UP. THE MEN AND WOMEN THAT COME BACK FROM DEPLOYMENT SAY, ‘IF I CAN MAKE IT THROUGH THIS, I CAN MAKE IT THROUGH ANYTHING.’”

— Veteran Tim Gillem

Translating military experience to the civilian workforce is often a difficult undertaking. While the skills acquired in the military are highly transferable, matching this extraordinary experience to traditional position descriptions can be a daunting task for wounded, ill, and injured Soldiers, Veterans, and their Families. Add to this equation the fact that most position descriptions are not often written in an easy-to-understand format, and you have a recipe for missed opportunities.

Helping wounded, ill, and injured Soldiers, Veterans, and their Families connect with your organization can be as simple as creating more effective position descriptions—ones that help the applicant actually picture themselves in the position. These strategies are not only helpful for Veterans, but also for reaching a diverse applicant pool.

When drafting and reviewing position descriptions, consider the following aspects of the position:

- Does the description clearly describe the position’s purpose and **overall contribution** to the company?
- What are the **essential and non-essential functions** of the position? When including non-essential, marginal, or less-frequent duties, consider:
 - ◆ Physical requirements (standing, walking, lifting, bending)
 - ◆ Learned skills (equipment proficiency, industry experience)
 - ◆ Job duties (travel, hours, shifts)
 - ◆ Behavioral skills (communication, leadership, time management)
- Identify or describe the **physical environment** and working conditions.
- What level of education and/or experience is needed to successfully accomplish the essential functions of the job? **How might military experience equate?**
- Duties are just half of the equation. What do other employees, departments, and customers count on this person to do? **Include expectations** relating to deadlines, customer service, and company success. Linking responsibilities to company goals helps the employee see how the position fits into the “big picture.”

ESSENTIAL VS. NON-ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

An essential job function must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- The reason the position exists is to perform this function. Removing this function would fundamentally change the position.
- There would be significant consequences if this function were not performed.
- A limited number of employees are able to perform this function

A non-essential job function may be important and need to be done by someone. However it is not critical, and its removal does not fundamentally alter the position. Additionally, a relatively high number of employees are able to perform the marginal function.

Effective position descriptions help potential employees know what is expected of them—even before they apply. It is always a good idea to revisit job descriptions annually to ensure they are accurate and true to the mission of your company. The more specific the job description, the more likely you are to attract Veteran candidates who understand how their skills and experience can translate to your company’s bottom line.

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT GETTING YOUR COMPANY POSITION DESCRIPTIONS TO THE MILITARY COMMUNITY:

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